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NEW YORK MAN SENTENCED FOR FALSE STATEMENTS

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE – United States Attorney Tom Colantuono announced that GARTH RICHARDS, 31, of 510 Riverdale Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, was sentenced Tuesday, February 22, 2005 to one year of probation for committing passport fraud. RICHARDS pled guilty in U.S. District Court in Concord in November of 2004 to one charge of making false statements in applying for a passport.

In March, 2001, RICHARDS, a citizen of St. Vincent, submitted a passport application in which he claimed that he was born in Greensboro, North Carolina. RICHARDS was indicted in U.S. District Court in February of 2004, after agents of the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service uncovered the fraud at the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. RICHARDS pleaded guilty to willfully and knowingly making false statements to the State Department in a passport application in order to fraudulently obtain a United States passport.

U. S. Attorney Colantuono highly commended the U. S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service for what he termed the "exceptionally diligent and efficient" handling of the investigation.

This case resulted from an ongoing initiative known as "Operation Checkmate" which is designed to identify false passport applications that are submitted for adjudication to the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The National Passport Center processes and adjudicates approximately two million applications each year, or one quarter of all United States passport applications. Operation Checkmate is a joint initiative of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Hampshire, the U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General and the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

RICHARDS was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Paul Barbadoro. Assistant U. S. Attorney Alfred Rubega prosecuted this case.